



A BETTER KIND OF POLITICS

Civilize It

5 Tips from Pope Francis for “a Better Kind of Politics”

In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis calls for “a better kind of politics, one truly at the service of the common good” (no. 154). Essential to a better kind of politics is the ability to foster a social love among people through dialogue across perspectives, inspiring “new ways of approaching the problems of today’s world, of profoundly renewing structures, social organizations and legal systems from within” (no. 183). What is “a better kind of politics”? It means working across differences to listen to one another and connect around shared values, resulting in creative solutions for the common good.

Here are 5 “musts” from Pope Francis that are essential for a “better kind of politics” in both our Church and society.

We are a human family

We must recover “the sense of belonging to a single human family.” After all, “we are all in the same boat” (no. 30). This is in stark contrast to the tendency, which has become commonplace, to disengage from difficult conversations and see only our own interests and perspectives. Pope Francis challenges us: “Isolation and withdrawal into one’s own interests are never the way to restore hope and bring about renewal” (no. 30). Instead of “the inclination to be concerned only with myself, my group, my own petty interests” (no. 166) we have to commit to overcoming “every individualistic mindset” and instead “seek the good of all people” including those we may see as different from us (no. 182).

We must commit to approaching others with love.

Even those with whom we disagree are children of God. Sadly, such an approach has become counter-cultural. We have become used to efforts aimed

more to “discredit and insult opponents from the outset than to open a respectful dialogue aimed at achieving agreement on a deeper level” (no. 201). This is a situation in which we must be prophetic, modeling by example a respectful approach that honors others as made in God’s image. This involves stepping outside ourselves, listening with empathy, and seeking to truly understand another person’s experience.

We must identify common values based on truth.

Social love, Pope Francis says, has to be “accompanied by a commitment to the truth” (no. 184) informed by both faith and reason (no. 185). An essential starting place for dialogue is to identify common values rooted in truth and justice, such as the dignity of the human person, or a commitment to fundamental human rights and integral human development. Identifying these common convictions can unite us despite our differences and lead to creative thinking and new solutions.

How can we get started?

- Take the pledge committing to charity, clarity, and creativity in your community at [Civilizelt.org](https://civilizelt.org).
- Share your commitment on social media using #Civilizelt.
- Invite your friends and family to do the same by [sharing prayers and resources](#) to help build “a better kind of politics.”

We must learn how to unmask the various ways that the truth is manipulated.

We must learn how to unmask the various ways that the truth is manipulated, distorted and concealed in public and private discourse” (no. 208), and to unmask media sources that are actually “powerful special interests that seek to tilt public opinion unfairly in their favor” (no. 201). An important starting point in preparing our hearts for dialogue is to consider from what sources I get my information. Are these sources reputable and long-standing? Are they neutral sources or connected with a particular political party or bias? Is it possible that I or others are being manipulated by persons or groups who have their own interests in mind? How can I check claims that I hear against multiple sources to ensure their accuracy before I share that information with others?

Dream, Pope Francis writes that polarization results when we erroneously perceive disagreement as contradiction instead of contraposition. With the former, we create separate “camps” where there is one winner and one loser. With the latter, differences exist but they are capable of interacting in a “fruitful, creative tension” (p. 79). In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis writes that we must seek to identify “shared goals that transcend their differences and can thus engage in a common endeavor” (no. 157). We must be willing to dialogue with open hearts and get comfortable with creative tension as we hold simultaneous points of view that don’t fit neatly together but which can yield solutions focused on the common good (no. 190).

Building a better kind of politics through social charity will not be a quick, nor easy process. It won’t be glamorous. Pope Francis writes, “Unlike disagreement and conflict, persistent and

“Hope is bold; it can look beyond personal convenience, the petty securities and compensations which limit our horizon, and it can open us up to grand ideals that make life more beautiful and worthwhile”.

– Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, no. 55

We must get comfortable with being a polyhedron.

Pope Francis uses the image of the polyhedron (a three-dimensional shape that has many faces) to “represent a society where differences coexist, complementing, enriching and reciprocally illuminating one another, even amid disagreements and reservations” (no. 215). “Authentic social dialogue,” he writes, “involves the ability to respect the other’s point of view and to admit that it may include legitimate convictions and concerns,” that others “have a contribution to make,” and that we can both “be frank and open about our beliefs, while continuing to discuss, to seek points of contact, and above all, to work and struggle together” (no. 203). In his book, *Let Us*

courageous dialogue does not make headlines, but quietly helps the world to live much better than we imagine” (no. 198). But if we approach our engagement with these guidelines in mind, and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we can arrive together at “a new kind of politics” that produces much fruit to help achieve a common good where all can thrive. How can we respond to this challenging invitation? One action that every Catholic can take is to visit CivilizeIt.org to take a pledge based on Pope Francis’ invitation in *Fratelli Tutti*. This webpage also includes numerous resources, including prayers, an examination of conscience, an individual/communal reflection guide, action steps, and much more. Visit CivilizeIt.org today to get involved!



Copyright © 2021, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington DC. All rights reserved.

This text may be reproduced in whole or in part without alteration for nonprofit educational use, provided such reprints are not sold and include this notice. Quotes from *Fratelli Tutti*, copyright © 2020, Libreria Editrice Vaticana (LEV), Vatican City State. Used with permission. Quotes from *Let Us Dream*, copyright © 2020 Austen Ivereigh. Used with permission. All rights reserved. Find this and other resources at CivilizeIt.org. #CivilizeIt

